ingful filters or search tools. As filters they could screen out information sources not on or similar to these pre-selected lists. As search tools they could be employed to locate additional instances of content or function that resemble those already on the lists. Examples example include be a television viewer-controlled system in which audiences have the ability to rate the acceptability of violence in particular television shows and movies interactively while watching them. As a result, each show could have one or more viewer-set indicators or measures on one or more "violence scales." By selecting a filter point of how much violence a viewing household is willing to accept (perhaps by time of day so that adults and children could set different levels), shows that exceed that level of violence would automatically be excluded (of course, viewers could turn on particular shows when they want, or reset their violence scale by altering a control, such as by moving a slider). In another television example, some news shows concentrate on politics, others on foreign events, many local news shows focus on local fires and murders, and what is called "tabloid journalism" offers what has been termed "sleaze." With such a VLR-based system as described here, viewers may be able to set personal filters that pro-actively assist in selecting the type of news in which they are interested, and the best shows in that category as judged by groups of viewers whose standards are similar to theirs. In sum, through the coordinated use of the information in VLR Servers, it is possible to construct readily available systems for personalizing and customizing many types of digital environments.

In an evolutionary mode, the users of these customized filters could make their choices and identities known to the VLR Servers from which they download their filter patterns. By doing so, the VLRs would serve as even more types of repositories for vendors who provide additional material that meets the needs of those buyers (whether the material is a TV show, a medical monitor that could work in several ways, or a software product). Such systems could enable customers to use their combined preferences and purchasing goals to guide vendors in more self-conscious ways than are possible today, to receive the market outcomes that consumers would rather have. Such customer-directed marketplace repositories provide clear metrics on the size and scope of particular market segments and specific customer objectives, along with identifying specific purchasers who want to be contacted with improved products and services. With clearer product improvement goals and focused communications, the savings from these efficiencies and the higher performance from achieving these goals can be shared as higher profits for first-to-market vendors and greater performance for early-adopter buyers.

Instead of the relatively closed communications systems described in the preferred embodiment, this embodiment provides: (1) the identification of "value" can be an active part of product use across marketplaces and digital environments, (2) that knowledge could be embodied in "Value Locator Repositories" that is employed by larger numbers of users so that they immediately receive greater value from products, services and environments (hereafter "products"), (3) those VLRs could be accessible during product use to improve performance interactively and immediately, (4) preferred sets of "value locators" could be downloaded to serve as filters to customize the digital environment to produce more of the product use outcomes purchasers prefer, (5) filters and those who employ them (where users are willing to share that information) could be stored on the VLRs where vendors could access them to learn what customers want to buy across the marketplace, (6) responsive vendors can serve those needs

faster, producing more rapid evolution toward the types of human welfare people themselves would like.

One result could be faster evolution of products, services, environments and markets to supply the types of human and product progress people need and want to purchase. A second result could be a faster transfer of commercial guidance from vendors to those who pay the money (e.g., customers). In the end, since customers spend the money they could now have an independent self-conscious ability, with interactive market-wide communications, to steer vendors toward selling them the world they would like to buy.

What is claimed is:

1. A unit, comprising:
a memory;
a transmitter; and
a processor, coupled to the memory and to the transmitter, configured to:
monitor a product for an occurrence in the product of a trigger event of a predefined plurality of trigger events,
increment a counter corresponding to the trigger event upon detection of the occurrence of the trigger event,
cause the display of a user interface, configured to probe for information regarding a use of the product, if the counter exceeds a threshold,
cause the memory to store an input received from the user interface, and
cause the transmitter to transmit the input to a server.

2. The unit of claim 1, wherein the input reflects a request to schedule maintenance.

3. The unit of claim 1, wherein the input reflects a submission of a purchase order.

4. The unit of claim 1, wherein the input reflects a request for interactive assistance.

5. The unit of claim 1, wherein the processor is further configured to:
monitor the product for an occurrence in the product of a second trigger event of the predefined plurality of trigger events, and
increment a second counter corresponding to the second trigger event upon detection of the occurrence of the second trigger event in the product.

6. The unit of claim 5, wherein the processor is further configured to:
cause the memory to store the second counter; and
cause the transmitter to transmit a value of the second counter.

7. The unit of claim 1, wherein one trigger event of the predefined plurality of trigger events is an exiting of a feature of the product without a use of the feature.

8. The unit of claim 1, wherein one of the predefined plurality of trigger events is a problem associated with the product.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the problem is an equipment problem.

10. The unit of claim 1, wherein a trigger event of the predefined plurality of trigger events is a use of at least one product feature.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the at least one product feature is "undo."

12. The unit of claim 1, wherein the product is a medical instrument.

13. The unit of claim 1, wherein the product is a cellular telephone.